

CONVOCATION ADDRESSES INVOLVE A DOUBLE MYSTERY. THE FIRST MYSTERY IS WHY ONE IS INVITED TO SPEAK. PRESUMABLY ONE IS EXPECTED TO PROVIDE WISDOM, OR ENTERTAINMENT, OR BOTH. I HOPE THOSE EXPECTATIONS MAY NOT BE COMPLETELY DISAPPOINTED TODAY.

THE SECOND MYSTERY IS WHY ONE ACCEPTS SUCH AN INVITATION. PROBABLY, ONE HAS THE ILLUSION OF HAVING SOMETHING SIGNIFICANT OR ENTERTAINING TO SAY. ONE'S SENSE OF HUMOR DECREASES WITH AGE, WHEREAS THE NUMBER OF SUCH INVITATIONS INCREASES. THE DANGER, HOWEVER, IS THAT ONE MAY BEGIN TO TAKE ONESELF SERIOUSLY, WHICH IS THE WORST SIGN OF AGING AND DECAY.

I DO NOT MEAN, OF COURSE, THAT ONE SHOULD NOT TAKE ANYTHING SERIOUSLY. THAT WOULD BE A PLEA FOR CYNICISM. I ONLY MEAN THAT ONE SHOULD NEVER YIELD TO THE TEMPTATION OF CONSIDERING ONESELF SIGNIFICANT IN SOME ABSOLUTE SENSE. WHENEVER ONE BEGINS TO FEEL PLEASED WITH ONESELF, SATISFIED WITH ONE'S STANDING OR ACHIEVEMENTS AND INCLINED TO PONTIFICATE, ONE SHOULD GO BACK AND REREAD ALBERT CAMUS' BOOK, THE FALL. ESPECIALLY, ONE SHOULD READ THE PASSAGE IN WHICH THE HERO, JEAN-BAPTISTE CLAMANCE, FEELING SUCCESSFUL AND WISE, WELL-BEHAVED AND SELF-PLEASED, SUDDENLY ONE EVENING, ON A QUAI ALONG THE SEINE, HEARS BEHIND HIMSELF A SUDDEN LAUGHTER -- A MOCKING LAUGHTER, COMING FROM NOWHERE AND DEFLATING AT ONCE AND FOREVER THE HOLLOW PRETENSIONS OF ~~HIS~~ SHALLOW LIFE. CONVOCATION SPEAKERS BEWARE -- IT CAN HAPPEN ANYWHERE, ON A SPEAKER'S PODIUM AS WELL AS ON THE QUAIS OF THE SEINE.

TRUTHFULLY, ONE ACCEPTS THE INVITATION TO GIVE A CONVOCATION ADDRESS BECAUSE OF A MIXTURE OF VARIOUS EMOTIONS: THERE IS VANITY; THERE IS, IN THIS CASE, GRATITUDE TO AN INSTITUTION BY WHICH I HAVE BEEN HONORED; AND, LET US ADMIT IT, THERE IS SOME LOVE OF PAGEANTRY. COLLEGE COMMENCEMENTS, FOOTBALL GAMES AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS ARE ALL THE COLORFUL PROCESSIONS THAT ARE LEFT IN OUR DRAB SOCIETY. MORE SERIOUSLY, ONE ACCEPTS THE INVITATION BECAUSE OF THE CHALLENGE OF TRYING OUT SOME IDEAS ON AN INTELLIGENT AUDIENCE.

I HAVE TAKEN AS MY TOPIC TODAY GROWING UP SENSIBLE, A VARIANT ON THE TITLE OF PAUL GOODMAN'S BOOK GROWING UP ABSURD. MOST OF YOU PROBABLY KNOW THAT PAUL GOODMAN, WHO BY THE WAY WAS LIKE MYSELF A SOCIALIST, MEANT BY HIS TITLE THAT OUR SOCIETY IS FULL OF ABSURDITIES; THAT OUR EDUCATIONAL APPARATUS, AS WELL AS OTHER INSTITUTIONS, CONVERGE TO PROGRAM THE INDIVIDUAL INTO A DOCILE MEMBER OF THAT ABSURD WORLD. THIS CONVOCATION SEEMS TO BE A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO CONVERSE ABOUT THIS SUBJECT WITH A GROUP OF PEOPLE LIKE YOURSELVES WHO HAVE HAD EVERY EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY, AND TO ASK WHETHER AT THE END OF YOUR FORMAL EDUCATION YOU SEE IT AS A TRAINING FOR ABSURDITY OR AS A LIBERATION FROM ABSURDITY. DO YOU FEEL COMMITTED TO THE ABSURD WORLD OR DO YOU HAVE THE WILL TO GROW UP SENSIBLE? WHAT HAS YOUR EDUCATION DONE FOR YOU? OR RATHER, HOW DO YOU SEE YOURSELVES READY TO MAKE USE OF IT?

PAUL GOODMAN QUOTES A COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION FOR THE STATE OF NEW YORK AS PROCLAIMING "THE NEED FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO LEARN TO HANDLE CONSTRUCTIVELY THEIR PROBLEMS OF ADJUSTMENT TO AUTHORITY." "TO LEARN TO HANDLE CONSTRUCTIVELY THEIR PROBLEMS OF ADJUSTMENT TO AUTHORITY." THIS IS A STRANGE DEPARTURE FROM THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHIES OF SOCRATES OR OF JOHN DEWEY. WHAT AUTHORITY MUST ONE BE PROGRAMMED TO ADJUST TO, MAY I ASK? THE AUTHORITY OF THE TEACHERS, OR THAT OF THE BOSSES, OR THAT OF BOURGEOIS MORALITY? WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HANDLE SUCH PROBLEMS CONSTRUCTIVELY? TO BE READY TO FIT PASSIVELY INTO SOCIETY, AS AN UTTERLY REPLACEABLE ELEMENT IN AN IMMENSE COMPUTER? OR TO BE ABLE AND WILLING TO EXAMINE SOCIETY CRITICALLY, TO DRAW ONE'S OWN CONCLUSIONS AS TO THE ENDS AND MEANS OF THE SOCIAL PROCESS, AND TO CHOOSE WHERE ONE MAKES ONE'S STAND?

IF I HAD TO TRY MY HAND AT PRESCRIBING WAYS OF ACHIEVING FREEDOM FROM ABSURDITY, I WOULD PUT FORWARD TWO SUGGESTIONS. THE FIRST IS FREEDOM FROM GLIB SOLUTIONS; THAT IS, REJECTION OF THE PASSIVE ACCEPTANCE OF CANT AND PREJUDICE IN ANY FORM. THE SECOND PRECEPT IS COMMITMENT TO BE COMMITTED. LET ME TRY TO DEAL WITH THESE TWO SUGGESTIONS ONE AT A TIME.

FREEDOM FROM GLIB SOLUTIONS SOUNDS SIMPLE ENOUGH, AND YET IS MOST DIFFICULT TO PRACTICE. ALL RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS, AND THE FORMS IN WHICH THESE RELATIONS ARE EMBODIED, ARE AFFECTED BY SOME KIND OF WIDELY ACCEPTED

"TRUTHS": NATIONALISM, STATISM, RELIGION, PROPERTY RIGHTS, AND SO ON. EVERY SOCIAL RULE AND DEVICE THAT MAN HAS INVENTED TO FACILITATE COMMUNAL LIVING TENDS, WITH TIME, TO BECOME OSSIFIED INTO SOME KIND OF ABSOLUTE, CLAIMING VALIDITY INDEPENDENT OF THE COMMUNITY THAT THE RULE WAS ORIGINALLY MEANT TO SERVE. WHETHER IN ECONOMIC OR SEXUAL MORALITY, IN RELIGIOUS PRACTICES, IN RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS OR ORGANIZATIONS, WHEN SOCIAL CONDITIONS CHANGE, THE RULES BECOME HINDRANCES TO THE EXPLORATION AND EVOLUTION OF NEW PATTERNS OF LIFE. THEY BECOME THE MAINSTAYS OF THE BANAL LIFE. THEY BECOME PREJUDICES. HE WHO INTERNALIZES PREJUDICES GROWS UP GULLIBLE; HE GROWS UP ABSURD.

EDUCATION, IN PRINCIPLE, IS A STRUGGLE AGAINST PREJUDICE, AGAINST THE UNTHINKING ACCEPTANCE OF THE READY-MADE, TRIVIAL WAY OF THINKING. IT SHOULD BE THE ROYAL WAY TO GROWING UP SENSIBLE. YET, WITHIN EDUCATION ITSELF, EVEN EDUCATION OF HIGH CALIBER SUCH AS YOU HAVE RECEIVED, THE DANGER OF GLIB SOLUTIONS EXISTS. LET ME TAKE AN EXAMPLE, OUR EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY HAS BECOME SPLIT BETWEEN DISCIPLINES JUST AS OUR CULTURE HAS BECOME SPLIT. MANY OF YOU HAVE CERTAINLY READ C. P. SNOW'S BOOK THE TWO CULTURES, IN WHICH SNOW DEPLORED THAT SCIENTISTS AND NON-SCIENTISTS SEEM UNABLE TO UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER'S LANGUAGES AND PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS. THIS SPLIT EXISTS AND TENDS TO CREATE OR REINFORCE A VARIETY OF PREJUDICES.

SCIENTISTS, PROUD OF THEIR POWERFUL METHODOLOGY, TEND TO LOOK UPON NON-SCIENTISTS AS PEOPLE WHO DEAL WITH AREAS OF CULTURE THAT ARE IMMATURE, NOT YET INTERPRETABLE IN TERMS OF DIFFERENTIAL EQUATIONS, BUT ULTIMATELY TO BE AMENABLE TO THE FRAMEWORK OF SCIENCE. SOCIAL SCIENTISTS, ON THE OTHER HAND, TRY TO CREATE INTELLECTUAL STRUCTURES THAT MIMIC THOSE OF NATURAL SCIENCE, WITH VARIOUS DEGREES OF SUCCESS, AND DO SO AT THE RISK OF IGNORING SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT, NONQUANTIFIABLE ASPECTS OF THEIR SUBJECT MATTER -- ITS HUMAN ASPECTS. LEAST AMENABLE TO QUANTITATION ARE THE HUMANITIES, THE ARTS AND LITERATURE, WHICH DEAL WITH HUMAN EMOTIONS AND HUMAN PREDICAMENTS AND WITH THE RELATION OF MAN WITH THE SURROUNDING UNIVERSE. SOME SCIENTISTS MIGHT BELIEVE THAT THESE CONCERNS ARE ILLUSORY, BY-PRODUCTS OF THE SERIES OF EVOLUTIONARY ACCIDENTS THAT HAVE PRODUCED THE HUMAN MIND AND HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS. BUT THE HUMANIST REPLIES THAT IT IS EXACTLY THIS ACCIDENTAL ENDOWMENT OF MANKIND THAT CREATES PROBLEMS SUCH AS THE STRUCTURE OF THE MIND, THE NATURE OF THINKING, THE MEANING OF FREEDOM, PROBLEMS THAT EVEN A DETAILED KNOWLEDGE OF THE NETWORK OF THE BRAIN WOULD CERTAINLY NOT SOLVE. IF A MECHANISTIC SOLUTION OF THE MIND WERE TO BE FORTHCOMING, THIS WOULD BY NO MEANS DIMINISH THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HUMANISTIC APPROACH TO LIFE AND CONSCIOUSNESS. IN FACT, EVEN IN SCIENCE THE MOST CREATIVE EVENTS ARE NOT THE

QUANTITATION OF FACTUAL KNOWLEDGE BUT THE ACHIEVEMENT OF MAJOR GENERALIZATIONS, TRULY ACTS OF ARTISTIC IMAGINATION.

SEVERAL YEARS AGO I BECAME CONCERNED OVER THE GROWING PREJUDICES OF SOME OF MY SCIENCE STUDENTS AGAINST THE WORLD OF NON-SCIENCE, AND EVEN MORE CONCERNED ABOUT THE PREJUDICE OF MY NON-SCIENTIFIC COLLEAGUES AGAINST SCIENCE. SO I UNDERTOOK A LITTLE EXPERIMENT. I OFFERED TO THE FIRST-YEAR GRADUATE STUDENTS IN OUR BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT A SEMINAR ON WORLD LITERATURE, WHICH CONSISTED IN READING ONE BOOK A WEEK, MEETING AT MY HOME ON SUNDAY NIGHTS, AND MATCHING MY AMATEURISH INTEREST IN LITERATURE WITH THEIR RECENT COLLEGE EXPERIENCE. THE SEMINAR FLOURISHED FOR THREE YEARS, THEN ONE YEAR IT FOUNDERED ON THE ROCKS OF THE IRRATIONAL -- FROM EASTERN MYSTICISM TO EXTRASENSORY PERCEPTION. I WAS DISGUSTED AND GAVE UP; BUT THIS PAST YEAR -- 1974-75 -- I STARTED AGAIN, AND ONCE AGAIN IT WORKED BEAUTIFULLY. WE CHOSE OUR BOOKS WITHIN A SPECIFIC FRAMEWORK -- THIS PAST YEAR IT WAS THE EXISTENTIALIST APPROACH TO CONFLICT. WE EXPLORED WHAT THE WAYS OF SCIENCE CAN CONTRIBUTE AND WHAT THEY CANNOT, AND THE RELATIVE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TWO DOMAINS, SCIENCE AND ART. WE REFLECTED ON THE ROLE OF RATIONALITY; THE MEANING OF IRRATIONAL IMPULSES, AND THE SOURCES OF VALUES THAT RATIONAL AND IRRATIONAL IMPULSES PROVIDE TO SOCIETY. WE DISCUSSED THE NATURE OF THE FORCES THAT GENERATE CONFLICTING VALUES WITHIN SOCIETY AS WELL AS

WITHIN INDIVIDUALS. WE EXPLORED OUR OWN PREJUDICES AND EVEN SUCCEEDED IN ELIMINATING SOME OF THEM. SOME OF US FACED FOR THE FIRST TIME THE SEXIST OR THE RACIST WITHIN OURSELVES. I BELIEVE WE ALL EMERGED FROM THIS EXPERIENCE AS FREER AND MORE RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUALS. WE BUILT, I MIGHT SAY, A MINICOMMUNITY OF INTELLECTUALLY RATHER HONEST PEOPLE: SOMETHING VERY DIFFERENT FROM AN ENCOUNTER GROUP, POSSIBLY LESS THERAPEUTIC, BUT CERTAINLY LESS PHONY.

THERE ARE MANY MEANS OF HELPING EACH OTHER TO GROW UP SENSIBLE INSTEAD OF GULLIBLE; TO FACE NEW IDEAS AND NEW SOCIAL RELATIONS WITH AN OPEN AND RECEPTIVE MIND; TO REJECT THE PREJUDICES THAT SO MANY PEOPLE USE AS PROPS OF THEIR SHALLOW LIVES. IF WE SUCCEED IN DOING SO, WHAT PROPS SHALL WE PUT IN THE PLACE OF PREJUDICES?

IN THE PREFACE TO THE PLAY MAN AND SUPERMAN, GEORGE BERNARD SHAW WROTE: "THIS IS THE TRUE JOY IN LIFE, THE BEING USED FOR A PURPOSE RECOGNIZED BY YOURSELF AS A MIGHTY ONE." COMING FROM AN INTELLECTUAL TEASER LIKE SHAW, THIS IS A RATHER AMBIGUOUS FORMULATION. IT MIGHT BE INTERPRETED AS REFERRING TO A BELIEF OF BEING ONE OF THE ELECTED FEW, MOTIVATED BY SOME SORT OF COSMIC DRIVING FORCE. IN OTHER WORDS, IT MAY SOUND AS IF IT MEANT TAKING ONESELF SERIOUSLY. AND AS SOON AS THAT HAPPENS, AS I MENTIONED EARLIER, ONE HEARS BEHIND ONESELF THE MOCKING LAUGHTER THAT DEFLATED JEAN-PABTISTE CLAMANCE -- AND ONE'S PRETENSE COLLAPSES INTO IRRELEVANCE.

WHAT SHAW PROBABLY HAD IN MIND WAS SOMETHING VERY DIFFERENT. THE TRUE JOY IN LIFE IS THE CONVICTION OF BEING DRIVEN FROM WITHIN BY SOME PURPOSE THAT ONE HAS FREELY CHOSEN IN A REASONED AND CONSCIOUS WAY; A PURPOSE THAT ENCOMPASSES MORE THAN ONE'S OWN PLEASURE OR WELL-BEING, OR SUCCESS OR SECURITY; A PURPOSE THAT IS BIGGER THAN ONESELF, BIGGER THAN COMFORTABLE HONESTY, BIGGER THAN RESPECT FOR TRADITIONAL VALUES. A PURPOSE THAT HAS WITHIN ITSELF THE SEEDS OF GROWTH BECAUSE IT IS A CHOICE AND NOT A PREJUDICE. THIS IS WHAT I CALL THE SENSE OF COMMITMENT: A COMMITMENT THAT IS NOT BLIND AND UNREASONABLE, BUT ANGUISHED, SELF-SEARCHING, AND YET EFFECTIVE, AND LEADING TO DEVOTION, TO EXERTION, EVEN TO MARTYRDOM. AS SHAW STATED IN HIS NEXT SENTENCE, THE JOY IN LIFE IS "BEING THOROUGHLY WORN OUT BEFORE ONE IS THROWN ON THE SCRAP HEAP."

BEHAVIORIST PSYCHOLOGISTS AND PHILOSOPHERS MAY SAY THAT ANY SENSE OF FREELY CHOSEN COMMITMENT IS BUT A DELUSION; THAT ALL MOTIVES, CHOICES AND ACTIONS ARE MECHANICALLY DETERMINED BY A COMBINATION OF GENETIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMMINGS. WHETHER ONE AGREES OR NOT WITH IT, THE BEHAVIORIST PHILOSOPHY IS IRRELEVANT TO MY PRESENT THESIS. GROWING UP SENSIBLE CONSISTS IN BEHAVING AS IF IN FACT WE HAD INFINITE CHOICES OPEN TO US; USING OUR FACTUAL KNOWLEDGE AND RATIONAL THINKING AS HONESTLY AS WE CAN IN THE MAKING OF CHOICES; CONTINUOUSLY REEXAMINING OUR OWN ATTITUDES TO



DETECT AND UPROOT ANY CANT, HYPOCRISY, OR PREJUDICE; AND ACTING VIGOROUSLY TO PROMOTE THOSE CAUSES TO WHICH WE PROFESS TO BE COMMITTED. INTELLECTUAL INTEGRITY -- THE BELIEF IN THE PRINCIPLES OF FREEDOM, JUSTICE, EQUALITY AND HUMAN DECENCY -- IS MEANINGFUL WHEN IT IS COUPLED WITH PERSONAL INTEGRITY -- THE COMMITMENT TO ACT ON BEHALF OF THOSE PRINCIPLES.

ON A FAMOUS DAY, ON THE GETTYSBURG BATTLEFIELD, ABRAHAM LINCOLN SPOKE OF REDEDICATION. FOR THE INTELLECTUAL, REDEDICATION TO INTELLECTUAL INTEGRITY AND TO PERSONAL INTEGRITY IS A CONTINUING PROCESS. CAMUS' ANTI-HERO, JEAN-BAPTISTE CLAMANCE, WHEN SOME OF HIS VALUES WERE PROVED PHONY DID NOT HAVE WHAT IT TOOK TO TRANSFORM HIMSELF INTO A BETTER MAN -- AND HE COLLAPSED. HE HAD NOT GROWN UP SENSIBLE. HE WAS PROBABLY NOT A GRADUATE OF A GOOD GRADUATE SCHOOL. TODAY, MY WISH TO YOU IS THAT YOU CONTINUE TO GROW UP SENSIBLE. YOUR UNIVERSITY HAS GIVEN YOU THE MEANS TO DO SO.